Prevention & Early Intervention in Children & Young People’s Services

Promoting Inclusion
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Messages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effective programmes exist to encourage children to respect diversity, include others and feel a sense of belonging.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversity and inclusion work involves enhancing children’s self-esteem and social and emotional learning and helps them to be more inclusive of others, discriminate less and solve conflict effectively.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programmes that take place over a short period of time can have effective results in affirming children’s identity and fostering positive attitudes to diversity and inclusion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaging with themes of diversity and inclusion can be complex. Support is necessary for practitioners and parents in order to maximise the impact of the goals of interventions and programmes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>5</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Addressing and challenging potential pre-existing prejudices of parents should form part of any intervention design or implementation process. This form of intercultural awareness ensures that positive attitudes are being modelled in the home.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>6</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training is required to increase the capacity of professionals to engage effectively with children and their parents. This training acts as an agent of change and will have a sustainable impact as the new skills will be applied by practitioners working with subsequent groups of children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>7</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-schools, schools, after-schools and youth clubs are appropriate settings for running diversity and inclusion programmes. Media initiatives, community based programmes and school based programmes are effective methodologies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>8</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The implementation of legislation and policy can promote the inclusion and integration of members of ethnic minority and other excluded groups.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
For over a decade, a group of organisations has been running more than 52 prevention and early intervention programmes throughout the island of Ireland. This Initiative funded by The Atlantic Philanthropies, sometimes in conjunction with Government and other organisations supports diverse services working to influence a wide range of outcomes for children. ‘Promoting Inclusion’ is the fifth report in the series ‘Prevention and Early Intervention in Children and Young People’s Services’ produced by the Centre for Effective Services. The briefing paper provides a summary of the key learning from three programmes that have been evaluated. It contains 8 key messages and 8 recommendations.

**Why is it Important to Engage in Inclusion Work with Children?**

As Northern Ireland is a relatively new post-conflict society, engaging with themes of diversity and inclusion has increased relevance. Ireland and Northern Ireland are diverse societies. Research shows that children in school in Northern Ireland experience racism and research from Ireland reports that children from minority ethnic groups can experience difficulties integrating into schools and communities. Encouraging children to view difference as a positive and to include others from a variety of backgrounds should form part of policy strategies that promote integration in a growing multicultural society. Initiatives and programmes that affirm diverse identities and promote positive attitudes to diversity are vital for the successful integration of children and adults from minority ethnic groups. Interventions can positively impact a child’s social and emotional ability, self-esteem and sense of belonging and can give children the social skills and behaviour that is necessary to include their peers, and to participate fully in society. The potential impacts on a child who is a victim of discrimination or exclusion are anxiety, isolation and low academic achievement. Programmes developed to address this outcome area can have a positive impact on the overall well-being of children of all age-groups.

**Quotes from what Parents, Teachers, Practitioners and Children said about Promoting Inclusion Programme Reports**

“Children have been very welcoming of children of difference races/nationalities who have arrived throughout the year” *(Teacher: PATHS NI)*

“Positive trend in reduction of bullying, fighting, hitting/hurting others, because the children recognise the behavioural signs in others and in themselves.” *(Teacher: PATHS NI)*

“It makes me happy and I like to see everybody playing together and not leaving each other out” *(Child: PATHS NI)*

“If BELONG wasn’t there, the Traveller children would never get the opportunities BELONG is providing them with, e.g., homework clubs, summer schemes etc” *(Practitioner; BELONG)*

“It provides the opportunity for them to meet and get to know other children from either within or outside their own community, in a safe, fun and constructive environment.” *(Black, Minority, Ethnic Parent, Belong)*
Key Recommendations

Effective Approaches: Pre-existing and New Programmes in Diverse Settings

There is no ‘one size fits all’ approach to carrying out diversity and inclusion work with children. Programmes and services need to be selected not only on the basis of impact, but also taking into account the service users’ needs, the most appropriate mode of delivery and the most appropriate setting for that service. Learning from the Prevention and Early Intervention Initiative showed that media initiatives, community and school based programmes are all effective methodologies to use when carrying out diversity and inclusion work with children. Programmes that have been developed elsewhere and adapted to suit settings in Northern Ireland and Ireland can prove just as effective as programmes that have been developed locally. Effective interventions focusing on promoting positive attitudes to inclusion can be implemented in a variety of settings. Pre-schools, schools, after-school activities and youth clubs are appropriate settings for running diversity and inclusion programmes with children.

1. Decisions about what programme or intervention to use should be considered in relation to the local context, the needs of the target group, and the resources and readiness of practitioners to commit to the programme.

2. Diversity and inclusion initiatives should begin in early-years settings and continue on through primary school years so that messages can be reinforced in an age-appropriate way. Positive messages about diversity and inclusion should not be given just once, rather they should form part of the ongoing social learning of the child.

Self-esteem, Identity and Belonging

As children’s awareness of difference is at a crucial stage of development during pre-school and primary years, the process of affirming a child’s identity and helping children to recognise diversity in a positive manner ought to feature as an aspect of their social education. Affirming a child’s identity can lead to positive self-esteem, and can encourage and enhance a child’s active participation in pre-school and school. Participation in school leads to engagement with learning and as a result can help lead to positive life-long educational experiences linked to academic achievement, relationship-building, and a sense of belonging within a community. Learning from the Prevention and Early Intervention Initiative found that diversity and inclusion programmes improved children’s self-esteem, social and emotional skills, willingness to include others and involvement in their community.

3. Social and emotional development should form part of all diversity and inclusion initiatives so that children are enabled to feel confident in themselves, process emotions, communicate their feelings, and resolve conflict in a peaceful manner.

4. To ensure that all children benefit from their work, monitoring which children are taking part in initiatives, and which children are not taking part should be part of a programme design. Active outreach to ‘absent’ children should be undertaken.

Anti-racism: Positive Attitudes to Inclusion

Programmes that help children become inclusive of others from diverse backgrounds place an emphasis on valuing cultural identities and challenging prejudice and stereotypes. This, in turn, helps to reduce discrimination and racism towards others. The impact of racism on children can cause low self-esteem, anxiety and children who are excluded can become less inclined to interact with other children. Diversity and inclusion programmes also give children who may feel excluded the skills to cope with such emotions.

Learning from the Prevention and Early Intervention Initiative found that diversity and inclusion programmes enhanced the children’s social and emotional development and helped them become more respectful and inclusive of others from diverse backgrounds. The children were less likely to tease others who were different and more likely to spend time with children who were different to them.
5. Programmes promoting inclusive attitudes can help lower incidences of bullying and racial bullying. Incorporating an element of anti-bullying and anti-racist bullying should form part of a programme design and implementation.

Parents and Educators

During a child’s development, whether or not role-models such as parents and educators model inclusive attitudes and behaviours will have an impact on the development of a child’s own attitudes towards the inclusion of others. The role of families, communities and schools in contradicting and counteracting negative stereotypes and affirming diverse identities can assist children from majority and minority ethnic groups in building a positive perception of themselves and others. When carrying out programmes about diversity and inclusion, maintaining a link between the intervention setting and the home can highlight for children the importance of respecting difference and including others.

Learning from the Prevention and Early Intervention Initiative found mixed outcomes in relation to the impact of programmes on parents and practitioners’ attitudes. Initiatives that provided ongoing training for parents and practitioners reported more positive results.

6. Ongoing training and support offered to parents and practitioners will facilitate more successful outcomes and will enable initiatives to become sustainable. It is necessary that training and support is an integral part of any programme design and implementation process.

7. To make sure that the children’s needs are met, formal or informal communication with parents and educators about their own needs and the needs of the children should form part of all interventions.

8. In order for the education system to develop in relation to diversity in society, objectives from governmental and departmental policies and strategies must be implemented to create the necessary conditions for changes in practice.

Further Information on the learning from this Initiative

The full report Prevention and Early Intervention in Children and Young People’s Services – Promoting Inclusion accompanies this briefing paper and is available to download from www.effectiveservices.org/prevention/social-inclusivity

This is the first in a series of reports on promoting inclusion and subsequent reports will be issued as more evaluations are completed between now and 2014.

This briefing was produced by the Centre for Effective Services in conjunction with Niamh McGuirk from the Marino Institute of Education. CES is an independent, all-island organisation that helps services for children, young people and the community to make better use of evidence of what works so that they can deliver more effective services. Its work is supported by The Atlantic Philanthropies, the Department of Children and Youth Affairs and the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government. The Centre is limited by guarantee (Company Number 451580 and Charity Number 19438 in Ireland). Copyright ©The Centre for Effective Services, June 2013

For information contact capturingthelearning@effectiveservices.org
www.effectiveservices.org
## Promoting Inclusion

**THE MEDIA INITIATIVE**, delivered by Early Years, aims to promote positive attitudes to physical, social and cultural differences amongst young children, practitioners and parents.

**TARGET AUDIENCE**
Children aged 3–4 years

**HOW IT IS DELIVERED**
National television campaign supported by activities in pre-school settings

**WHAT’S CHANGED IN ATTITUDES TO DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION**
Improved socio-emotional development and cultural awareness in children. Improved parents’ confidence in talking to their children about diversity and inclusion.

**PROMOTING ALTERNATIVE THINKING STRATEGIES (PATHS NI)**, delivered by Barnardos NI, aims to improve childrens’ mutual understanding and respect, behaviour and attitudes, and to reduce bullying.

**TARGET AUDIENCE**
Children aged 5–11 years

**HOW IT IS DELIVERED**
In-school programme delivered by teachers

**WHAT’S CHANGED IN ATTITUDES TO DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION**
Improved behaviour, self-esteem, interactions with others, awareness of feelings and ability to deal with negative emotions and social conflicts.

**BELONG**, delivered by the South Tyrone Empowerment Programme (STEP), aims to increase cultural confidence and competence, coping skills, participation in clubs and schools, educational achievement of children from the Travelling Community, and to reduce bullying and racial bullying.

**TARGET AUDIENCE**
Children aged 7–12 years

**HOW IT IS DELIVERED**
Mentoring programmes, youth clubs and after-school activities

**WHAT’S CHANGED IN ATTITUDES TO DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION**
Increased self-esteem, cultural confidence, communication, behaviour and sense of belonging in children. Increased involvement in community activities.

---

## CES Briefing Paper Series

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisational Learning</th>
<th>Parenting</th>
<th>Child Behaviour</th>
<th>Children’s Learning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Promoting Inclusion</td>
<td>Child Health and Development</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>